



# Developing Markets for Continuous Living Cover Crops

## Grant Request for Proposal (RFP) Fiscal Year 2027

**Applications due by 4:00 p.m. Central Time (CT) on July 8, 2026**

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# Grant summary

## Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Developing Markets for Continuous Living Cover Crops (CLCC) grants. Grant funds are available to entities and organizations that advance regional development of emerging continuous living cover crops and cropping systems in Minnesota.

The CLCC grant exists to develop enterprises, supply chains, and markets for continuous living cover crops and cropping systems in the early stage of commercial development. For the purposes of this grant, "continuous-living cover crops and cropping systems" refers to agroforestry, perennial biomass, perennial forage, perennial grains, and winter-annual cereal grains and oilseeds that have market value as harvested or grazed commodities.

The CLCC grant funds projects that expand supply and markets for continuous living cover crops and cropping systems. The program is anticipated to provide new revenue streams for producers and emerging businesses and organizations in rural Minnesota and improve soil health and water quality by funding early-stage commercial development of continuous living crops.

The program is authorized under [Minn. Stat. §17.03](#) and funded through the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). All program information is available on the [Developing Markets for Continuous Living Cover Crops](#) webpage. Applications will be accepted until 4 p.m. CT on Wednesday, July 8, 2026.

## Funding availability

We anticipate awarding approximately \$450,000 using a competitive review process. The maximum award to a project is \$100,000 and the minimum is \$50,000. We anticipate awarding between five to seven funded projects, but the final number depends on the size of awards.

We expect most grant contract agreements to start in October 2026. Applicants should anticipate that grant contracts will have an end date in December 2027. Grant contracts may be extended on a case-by-case basis.

If selected, grantees may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed, the grant has reached its effective date, and the grantee has been notified by the state's authorized representative that they may begin work. This request for proposals does not obligate the State of Minnesota to award any grant contract agreements.

Funds awarded from the FY27 grant program are exempt from the income repayment requirements in the [Royalties, Copyrights, Patents, and Sale of Products and Assets statute](#), (Minn. Stat. §116P.10, paragraph (c)).

## Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making.

The Department of Administration Office of Grants Management (OGM) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities ([OGM Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#)). Applicants conducting projects that impact or serve Native American Tribal Communities are encouraged to apply.

This grant program will prioritize:

- projects that develop enterprises, supply chains, and markets for continuous living cover crops and cropping systems in the early stage of commercial development; and
- woman-owned businesses, businesses owned by members of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community, veteran-owned businesses, and businesses that meaningfully serve the BIPOC community or Native American Tribal communities.

This priority is reflected in the selection criteria reflected in the [Proposal Evaluation Profile](#).

## How to apply

Applications are due by **4 p.m. CT July 8, 2026**.

- Apply for the Developing Markets for Continuous Living Cover Crop Grant using the [MDA's online application system](#).
  - If you're a new user, you need to create an account. Use this [how-to guide \(PDF\)](#) to help set up your account.
  - Once logged in, select Developing Markets for Continuous Living Cover Crop Grant May 2026.
  - After you have submitted your application, you will receive a confirmation email. Contact [Jen.Schaust@state.mn.us](mailto:Jen.Schaust@state.mn.us) if you do not receive this email.
- The MDA will not accept late applications.
  - Apply early so there is enough time to get help with the online application system if needed. It's best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.
  - The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It is your responsibility as the applicant to ensure we receive your application before the deadline.

We will accept only one application per organization.

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this Request for Proposals (RFP), as such materials will not be considered nor evaluated.

The MDA reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet these requirements.

By submitting an application, each applicant warrants that the information provided is true, correct, and reliable for purposes of evaluation for potential grant award. The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the award, as well as subject the applicant to suspension or debarment proceedings and other remedies available by law.

The applicant is responsible for all costs associated with submitting a response to this RFP.

## How to submit questions

For questions about the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT on Wednesday, June 24, 2026**.
- Email [Jen.Schaust@state.mn.us](mailto:Jen.Schaust@state.mn.us) with “Developing Markets for CLC Crop Grant” in the subject line.

The MDA will post responses to program questions on the Questions and Answers (Q&A) section of the [CLC RFP Questions and Answers](#) webpage as we receive them.

MDA employees are not authorized to give advice on any applications. Applicants who solicit or receive advice from unauthorized MDA employees may be disqualified from eligibility for a grant award.

## Application guidelines

- Use plain, easily understood language.
- Answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.
- Although some questions are labeled as optional, we strongly recommend responding to those questions or uploading the appropriate documents.
- Ensure your application is your own, a unique proposal designed to respond to the RFP.
- Make sure your budget is realistic and includes only eligible items. Write a detailed budget narrative that clearly explains how the money will be spent.
- Review the [Project Evaluation Profile](#) included in this RFP, as it is used to score and compare grant applications.

## Timeline and deadlines

**May 28, 2026** ..... RFP posted on the MDA website.

**June 24, 2026 at 4 p.m. CT** ..... Deadline to ask grant program questions.

**July 8, 2026 at 4 p.m. CT** ..... Application period closes.

**August 2026** ..... Applicants notified of funding decisions.

**October 2026** ..... Expected start date once the contract is signed by all parties.

The entity awarded this grant may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed, the grant has reached its effective date, and the grantee has been notified by the state’s authorized representative that they may begin work.

# Eligibility

## Eligible applicants

Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements to be considered for this grant opportunity.

- Be a non-profit or for-profit organization, government agency, or Tribal entity authorized to do business in the state of Minnesota.
- Be in good standing in the State of Minnesota:
  - No back taxes owed.
  - No defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the last seven years.
  - Acceptable performance on past grants with Minnesota state agencies if previously received.
  - Be appropriately licensed and authorized to conduct business in Minnesota.
  - Not suspended or debarred from doing business with the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
  - No conviction of felony financial crimes of its principals for the past 10 years.
  - Registered and current with annual reporting requirements to the Minnesota Attorney General's office if required under [MINN.STAT. 309.53](#) and [MINN. STAT. Chapter 309](#).
  - Compliant with current state regulations and statutes.

## Eligible projects

Projects must:

- Aim to develop and accelerate enterprises, supply chains, and markets for CLC crops and cropping systems in the early stage of commercial development in Minnesota.
- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its effective date listed in the grant contract agreement.
- Be located in Minnesota.
- Benefit the State of Minnesota.

We encourage organizations that are not for-profit entities that are owned, operated by, or serving Native American tribal communities to apply.

Applicants should review the [Conflicts of Interest](#) section prior to applying. The selected grantee must agree to these rules as a part of signing their grant contract agreement.

MDA employees and their spouses or domestic partners, farms, LLCs, or businesses principally operated by them are not eligible applicants and are not eligible to receive funds from this grant program.

Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to customized harvesting, seed cleaning and storage, processing equipment to make food products, developing markets, and bringing these products to consumers.

Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to

- Organizations engaged in work related to CLC crops and cropping systems.
- For-profit businesses: companies (including LLCs and S, C, and Benefit corporations) whose primary function involves the production, processing, or marketing of CLC crops and cropping systems.
- Agricultural cooperatives: member-owned business entities that provide, offer, or sell CLC agricultural products or services for the mutual benefit of the members.
- Local government entities involved in the production, commercialization, marketing, or related activity of CLC crops and cropping systems.
- Economic development organizations and non-profit organizations involved in the production, commercialization, marketing, or related activity of CLC crops and cropping systems.
- Tribes and urban American Indian Communities involved in the production, commercialization, marketing, or related activity of CLC crops and cropping systems.

Applicants must respond to all criteria provided in the Project Evaluation Profile to be considered an eligible project.

## Collaboration

Eligible applicants may collaborate with other organizations, but it is not required.

If eligible applicants are submitting a joint application with collaborators, they must provide a written description of the proposed collaboration and determine which business, or organization will have the grant contract agreement with the MDA and will work directly with the MDA to meet grant reporting requirements. Note that this entity will receive a 1099 from the State of Minnesota for income tax purposes.

## Eligible project expenses

Funds awarded to Grantees must be used to pay expenses related to the planning and execution of the Developing Markets for Continuous Living Cover Crops grant. Funding is provided to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture from the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Please refer to the [LCCMR Guidance on Allowable Expenses](#).

Eligible project expenses will:

- Be direct expenses related to planning, conducting and publishing findings and recommendations to the Minnesota State Legislature.
- Be incurred and paid for by Dec 31, 2027.
- Be conducted in and benefit the State of Minnesota.
- Are directly related to the project outcomes.

Examples of eligible expenses

Costs will be reasonable and necessary for the project and described in a budget and budget narrative as:

- personnel costs (salaries/wages) and fringe benefit expenses including FICA/Medical, retirement, and health insurance to carrying out the proposed project
- project-related in-state travel
- materials and supplies related to the project
- equipment
- professional and technical services specified in the approved work plan
- other.

No purchasing, purchase agreements, sales orders, purchase orders, downpayment, or agreements of any kind creating an obligation to purchase equipment, supplies, or contracting for goods and services may occur prior to the full execution of the grant contract agreement or its effective date, whichever is later.

## Indirect costs

To receive a grant from an appropriation of state funds, grantees must agree as a term of the grant contract agreement that administrative/indirect costs must be necessary and reasonable ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, Subd. 1](#))

## Ineligible expenses

You must be invoiced and pay for all project materials and services between the effective (start) date and end date listed on your grant contract agreement. Any expenses incurred outside of this timeframe are not eligible for reimbursement.

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Costs, **including pre-ordering**, incurred **before** the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and reached its start date, whichever is later, or those incurred after the grant contract agreement expires.
  - Obtaining bids and quotes is allowed before the grant contract agreement is executed; however, accepting these bids/quotes before execution of the grant contract agreement is not allowed.
- Expenditures incurred or paid **after** the grant contract agreement expires.
- Expenses paid for with cash.
- Purchase of non-operational equipment.
- Leasing of equipment.
- Gift cards or vouchers; gas cards; and other forms of pre-paid cards, vouchers, or compensation.
- General operating, overhead, or indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project).
- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient) or provided to the applicant by a third party.
- Advertising (except outreach to promote the technical assistance services and resources offered as part of the project), public relations, entertainment, alcohol, and amusement costs.
- Any purchases from an entity with which the applicant, its board members, spouse, domestic partner, or staff owns an interest, or an entity of which they are an employee. (Please refer to the [Conflicts of Interest](#) section for more information.)

- Any purchase from an entity items or services from MDA employees, their spouses/domestic partners, or any farms or businesses owned or principally operated by them or their spouses/domestic partners. (Please refer to the Conflicts of Interest section for more information.)
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes.
- Fines, penalties, and other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to follow federal, state, local, or Tribal nation laws and regulations including parking and traffic violations.
- Fundraising.
- Payments to lobbyists and political contributions incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions regardless of purpose for which funds will be used.
- Late payment fees, finance charges, legal costs, bad debts, or contingency funds.
- Cost incurred for parking, traffic violations.
- Fees for legal services and compensation for accountants, consultants, and grant writers.
- Out-of-state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.
- Expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any federal, state, or local government funding or other grants. Projects which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs may not receive funding for the same activities and expenses.
- Entertainment, amusement, diversion, social activities, gifts, or any costs associated with such purchases (such as tickets to shows or sports events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, alcohol, and gratuities).
- Lobbyists, including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying, and political contributions.
- Capital improvements, such as construction of buildings, land purchases, and building or laboratory improvements.
- Costs of goods or services for personal use of the employees including training costs, regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees.

## Matching funds

Matching funds are not required.

## Application review process

### Review process

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process. During the first phase of the review process, MDA staff and external reviewers evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria and weight in the Project Evaluation Profile. Only applications that are complete and received by the deadline will be reviewed.

Reviewers and staff will meet and discuss the proposal and then recommend whole or partial funding to the Commissioner of Agriculture, who reviews the recommendations and makes the award decisions. Reviewers, staff, and the Commissioner may consider applicant's history as a state grantee, including performance on previous grants, compliance with state rules and regulations, and capacity to perform the work.

The MDA reserves the right to offer partial awards based on an assessment of the proposal, the pool of applicants, funding availability, or overall objectives of the grant program.

During the second phase of the review process, applicants that made it past the first phase will be contacted by MDA staff to submit any additional documentation required for the pre-award risk and capacity assessment.

## **Pre-award risk assessment**

The MDA is required to consider a grant applicant's past performance and financial and operational capacity before awarding grants. ([MINN. STAT. 16B.981, Subd. 2-5](#), [OGM Policy 08-02: Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#), and [OGM Policy 08-06: Preaward Risk Assessment of Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#))

Applicants' capacity to perform work related to the grant will be evaluated as part of their response to this RFP. Applicants being considered for an award may also be required to submit additional documents, such as financial reports, descriptions of internal controls, disclosure of conflicts of interest, and information about the performance on previous state grants, prior to being approved by MDA for an award.

If the MDA determines that the potential grantee has substantial risks that inhibit its ability to perform the required duties under the grant contract agreement, then the MDA may either request more information for the purpose of satisfying the concerns, develop a risk mitigation plan to protect the interests of the state, or not award the grant.

## **Nonprofit organizations will submit the following:**

- A description of your capacity to complete the project. This may include your current staffing, project partners, current budget, and previous experience performing similar work. You will need to include information on any grants received from the MDA or other state agency in the last five years.
- A copy of your organization's two most recent Form 990 or Form 990-EZ with the Internal Revenue Service. If your organization has not been in existence long enough or is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, then you must submit the following information:
  - Proof of your organization's tax-exempt status.
  - Board-reviewed financial statements for the two most recent business years, or for new organizations, actual financial statements for the periods that are available and pro forma financial projections for at least a two-year period.
  - Documentation of your organization's internal controls.
- The two most recent certified financial audits if required to complete one under [MINN.STAT. 309.53, Subd. 3](#) (if the organization has received total revenue in excess of \$750,000 for the 12 months of operations covered by the statement).
- Certification that you or your entity has not been suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or with the federal government.
- Documentation that your organization is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State and registered with the Attorney General's office, and current on its annual reporting requirements, if required for your organization ([MINN.STAT. 309.515](#), [309.52](#), and [309.53](#)).

- Certification that you, your board members, staff, or anyone else with authority to access grant funds have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years ([MINN.STAT. 309.53, Subd. 3](#)).
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure.

### **For-profit organizations and businesses will submit the following:**

- A description of your capacity to complete the project. This may include your current staffing, project partners, current budget, and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to provide information on any grants received from the MDA or other state agency in the last five years.
- A copy of the business' two most recent years of federal and state tax returns. If the business has not been in business long enough to have a tax return, then you must submit alternative documents, including documentation of internal controls.
- Financial statements including annual balance sheets, income statements, and statement of cashflows, for the two most recent years. If the business has not been in existence long enough, financial statements for the periods that are available and/or pro forma financial projections for at least a two-year period can be accepted.
- Certification that you or your entity has not been suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or with the federal government.
- Documentation that the business is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Certification that the business is not under bankruptcy proceedings and disclosure of any liens on assets.
- Certification that you, your board members, staff, or anyone else with authority to access grant funds have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.
- Conflict of Interest disclosure.

### **Political subdivisions will submit the following:**

- A description of your capacity to complete the project; this may include your current staffing, project partners, current budget, and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to provide information on any grants received from the MDA or other state agency in the last five years.
- Certification that you, your board members, staff, or anyone else with authority to access grant funds have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Political subdivision include counties, towns, cities, school districts, and other municipal corporations or political subdivisions of the state authorized to enter into contracts.

### **Award notice**

The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing.

## Conflicts of interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers. ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 2-3](#) and [OGM Policy 08-01: Grants Conflict of Interest \(PDF\)](#))

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A Grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties, or
- A Grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

In cases where a conflict of interest is in question or disclosed, the applicants or Grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to, revising the grant work plan or Grantee duties to mitigate the risk, requesting the grant applicant to submit a conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, amending the grant, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

Grantees may generally not purchase items and services from staff, board members, farms owned/operated by staff or board members, or other individuals with whom they have an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest. If grantees want to consider any of these individuals/organizations when making purchases, they must submit a conflict-of-interest disclosure and mitigation plan to the MDA for pre-approval. The plan must address how any conflicts of interest will be mitigated, including a plan for selecting vendors that includes meaningful involvement from non-board/staff members.

Grantees may not purchase foods or other items or services from MDA employees, their spouses/domestic partners, or any farms or businesses owned or principally operated by them or their spouses/domestic partners.

## Privacy notice and data classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under this program. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

Data provided in this application is initially classified by the [Minnesota Data Practices Act](#) as private or nonpublic, although some or all of the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data are otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited to those authorized by law, including but not necessarily limited to MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access these data, parties authorized by the applicant, parties identified in a valid court order or federal subpoena, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement or the Office of the Attorney General.

Per Minnesota's statute on grants ([MINN. STAT. 13.599](#)):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in application responses (except for data otherwise classified by law, including trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed.
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information, see below) will generally be public data after the evaluation process is completed.

Procedure for claiming protection of trade secrets:

Trade secret information is classified as not public data. In order to qualify as trade secret information, the data in question must be provided to the MDA by the affected person (i.e. the data must be about the applicant) and otherwise meet the legal definition found in statute ([MINN. STAT. 13.37, subd. 1\(b\)](#)). In order for an applicant to assert trade secret protection for data submitted as part of this application: the applicant must: 1) clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, or process that the applicant believes to be trade secret information; 2) describe what efforts the applicant takes to maintain the secrecy of the data; and 3) adequately explain how the data derive(s) independent economic value from not being generally known to, and not readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons. Merely asserting trade secret protection does not, in and of itself, classify the data in question as not public; determining what data meet the definition of trade secret information is ultimately the legal responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data identified as trade secret information by an applicant will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, the data in question will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

All persons, businesses, and individuals applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must comply with applicable laws. Under the law titled Right of Setoff ([MINN. STAT. 270C.65, subd. 3](#)), a Grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the State of Minnesota, to federal and state tax agencies, and to state personnel involved in the payment of state obligations. These identification numbers may be used in the enforcement of federal and state tax laws which could result in action requiring a Grantee to file state tax returns and pay delinquent state tax liabilities, if any.

## Requirements of grant recipients

### Grant contract agreement

Each grantee must formally enter into a grant contract agreement with the MDA. The grant contract agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation for the project. Grant contract agreement templates are available for review on the [OGM Forms and FAQs webpage](#). The MDA reserves the right to adjust these templates.

Upon approval of an application and before beginning work on the grant project and incurring any grant expenses, the applicant selected for a grant award must:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that the information in SWIFT is correct.
- If required, submit other documentation and certifications within 15 calendar days of award notification.
- Read and sign a grant contract agreement within 30 calendar days of being sent to the grantee. Failure to sign the contract within 30 calendar days may result in the award being rescinded.

You cannot begin work on grant activities or incur any grant expenses until a fully executed grant contract agreement is in place and you have been notified by the State's Authorized Representative that work may start. A fully executed grant contract agreement is one that has been signed by all parties and reached its start date, whichever is later. You must comply with the conditions and of the grant contract agreement, and you will be legally responsible for assuring implementation of the grantee duties and compliance with all applicable state requirements including worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

## **Accountability and reporting**

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to monitor progress on state grants by requiring grantees to submit written progress reports at least annually until all grant funds have been expended and all of the terms in the grant contract agreement have been met.

Grantees will be required to submit progress reports throughout the grant period. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports without a written extension. The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements throughout the grant.

Progress reports will be due quarterly. The final report is due 30 calendar days after the expiration date listed in the grant contract agreement and must be approved by the Authorized Representative before the final request for reimbursement is paid.

Failure to regularly report on progress and promptly respond to information requests may impact the grantee's ability to secure future funding from the MDA or other state agencies.

Information reported to the MDA may be classified as public data. If the grantee considers any information in the report to be trade secret, the grantee may request that the trade secret information be kept confidential and must specifically label that information. The MDA will notify the grantee if a public records request is made for the information claimed as protected by the grantee.

## **Monitoring**

The MDA monitors grantees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame, to collect data on outcomes, determine if financial procedures are followed accurately and appropriately, and/or verify purchases made with grant funds. The MDA monitors all grantees with awards greater than \$25,000 before approving final payment. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation of at least one invoice on grants greater than \$25,000. Financial reconciliation may be performed on additional payment requests at the discretion of the MDA. For this purpose, the grantee must provide cost documentation showing proof of purchase and payment, such as invoices, expense receipts, employee timesheets, employee time log including activities completed, cleared checks, bank or credit card statements, and any other supporting documents requested by MDA.

## Payments

Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget and be tied to documented progress working on the project. The MDA shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment.

Requests for reimbursement must include two types of proof for each expense: proof of purchase (e.g., invoices, itemized receipts, payroll reports, etc.); and proof of payment (e.g., cleared checks, credit card statements, bank statements, proof of payroll payment, etc.). Time sheets and time logs that include activities completed each day are also needed for personnel costs.

Reimbursement requests are submitted quarterly at dates determined by MDA. A final request for reimbursement must be submitted to the MDA no later than 30 calendar days after the grant end date.

All requests for reimbursement must be submitted to the MDA no later than 30 calendar days after the grant end date. Grant payments will not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the Grantee a written extension.

The MDA may, at its discretion, hold back the final 10% of the grant award until the grantee demonstrates completion of their objectives described in their proposal, including completion of reporting, unless otherwise approved by the MDA.

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation. Any additional requests must be submitted by the grantee before the MDA provides reimbursement. Grant payments will not be made on grants if required documentation related to the invoice or financial reconciliation is missing.

Grant payments may be used to fulfill federal and state tax liabilities or may be withheld until the grantee has paid any tax liabilities ([MINN. STAT. 270C.65, Subd. 3](#) and other applicable laws).

## Contract and bidding requirements

All Grantees must abide by the state's bidding requirements, based on their entity type.

### Nongovernmental entities

Grantees that are nongovernmental entities, including businesses and nonprofit organizations, must use these guidelines:

- Any services and/or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three verbal quotes or bids or be awarded to a targeted vendor.
- Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two verbal quotes or bids or be awarded to a targeted vendor.

- The Grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:
  - [Office of State Procurement – Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged, and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#)
  - [Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business \(MCUB\) Program Directory](#)
  - Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: [Central Certification \(CERT\) Directory](#).
- The Grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.
- The Grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process used to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single source bid, if applicable.
- Notwithstanding the above, the MDA may waive bidding process requirements when:
  - Vendors included in the response to a competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant; or
  - It is determined there is only one reasonably able and available source for such materials or services and that the Grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- The Grantee and any subrecipients must comply with prevailing wage rules, as applicable ([MINN. STAT. 177.41](#) through [MINN. STAT. 177.50](#)).
- The Grantee and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#) and [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](#).

### Political subdivisions or municipalities

Grantees that are political subdivisions or municipalities must use these guidelines:

- Municipalities are required to comply with the Uniform Municipal Contracting Law ([MINN. STAT. 471.345](#)).
- The grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees for the selection, award, and administration of contracts.
- The grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process used to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single source bid, if applicable.
- The grantee and any subrecipients/subcontractors must comply with prevailing wage rules, as applicable ([MINN. STAT. 177.41](#) through [MINN. STAT. 177.50](#)).
- Municipalities and any subrecipients/subcontractors must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government (See [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#)) and [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](#).

### Grantee website and publicity

All grant projects must publicly credit the MDA funding in all public communications, presentations and printed materials and include that information on the Grantee’s website. Additionally, in accordance with [MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 5 \(d\)](#)), Grantees with a website must clearly post on their website the names and contact

information for the grantee's leadership and the employee(s) or other person(s) who directly manages and oversees the grant contract agreement on behalf of the Grantee (the authorized representative).

## **Audits and record retention**

The Grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the Grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the commissioner of administration, the state granting agency, the state auditor, the attorney general, and the legislative auditor, as appropriate ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)). This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant contract agreement end date; receipt and approval of all final reports; or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

## **Affirmative action and nondiscrimination**

The Grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, familial status or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified ([MINN. STAT. 363A.02](#)). The Grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The Grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The Grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship ([Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500](#)).

The Grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the [Minnesota Human Rights Act](#).

## **Voter registration**

The Grantee will provide voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the Grantee ([MINN. STAT. 201.162](#)).

## **Grantee evaluation**

Prior to the closeout of the grant, the MDA will evaluate the performance of all Grantees. The evaluation will include the purpose of the grant; the amount provided to the Grantee; an appraisal of the Grantee's timeliness, quality, and overall performance in meeting the terms and objectives of the grant; if the grant was terminated; and any concerns with Grantees use of State funds. Evaluations of Grantee performance for grant contract agreements greater than \$25,000 must be provided by the MDA to the Minnesota Department of Administration (MINN.STAT. 16B.98, subd. 12). Evaluations are considered public data (MINN. STAT. 13.599).

## Right of cancellation

This Request for Proposal does not obligate the MDA to award a grant. The MDA reserves the right to cancel this Request for Proposal, if in the best interest of the program, agency, or the State of Minnesota. The State also reserves the right to negotiate modifications to the application or to reject any and all applications received as a result of this Request for Proposals. The State does not intend to award a grant contract agreement solely on the basis of any response made to this request or pay for information solicited or obtained.

## Definitions

**Continuous Living Cover Crop:** For the purposes of this grant, "continuous-living cover crops and cropping systems" refers to agroforestry, perennial biomass, perennial forage, perennial grains, and winter-annual cereal grains and oilseeds that have market value as harvested or grazed commodities.

# Proposal evaluation profile

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
<p><b>Project description (0-15 points)</b></p> <p>Applicant clearly and compellingly describes how the project contributes to commercialization, supply chain and /or market development of CLC crops and cropping systems in Minnesota</p>	15
<p><b>Business readiness, financial sustainability, and experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Business summary (5 points)</b> Applicant describes how their organization’s mission, goals, and services/products relate to continuous living cover crops and cropping systems (including current work) and their ownership/leadership.</li> <li>● <b>Organization plan summary (0-5 points)</b> Applicant demonstrates sound business management, financial aptitude, and stability.</li> <li>● <b>Connection to continuous living cover crops and cropping systems (0-5 points)</b> The applicant’s work and past investments relate to CLC crops and cropping systems and demonstrates experience.</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Impact on Minnesota agriculture and the environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Current CLC crops or cropping systems (2 points)</b> Answered the question yes or no.</li> <li>● <b>Scale of CLC crops and cropping systems (0-5 points)</b> Applicant described how the project will change the scale of CLC crops and cropping systems and provided before and after estimates. <b>Change in scale is achievable.</b></li> <li>● <b>Supply chain and market development (0-5 points)</b> Applicant described collaborators, provided number of market partners and outlets used, and is positioned to develop the supply chain/market. <b>Project meaningfully adds resiliency in the supply chain or market.</b></li> <li>● <b>Market expansion and diversification (0-5 points)</b> Applicant clearly explained project plans/goals to diversify markets and/or increase market access. <b>Project has the potential to drive and scale up the demand for growing perennial and winter annual crops on agricultural lands in Minnesota.</b></li> <li>● <b>Increasing sales (0-5 points)</b> Applicant clearly described how the project will increase the sales of Minnesota agricultural products from CLC crops or cropping systems. <b>The expected increase in sales is realistic.</b></li> <li>● <b>Impact on Minnesota’s environment (0-8 points)</b> Applicant clearly described the environmental benefits of this project and how it will protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance Minnesota’s air, water, land, fish, wildlife or other natural resources.</li> </ul>	30
<p><b>Measuring outcomes (0-15 points)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Objectives of project are measurable and clearly stated</li> <li>● Describes how the project will achieve objectives of the grant program and benefit the organization</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Project workplan and timeline (0-10 points)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Workplan is thorough and realistic</li> <li>● A description of each step of the grant project is provided with estimated dates</li> </ul>	10

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
<b>Budget (0-10 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget clearly details all project costs in the requested budget format and budget narrative.</li> <li>• Budget is cost effective, and planned purchases are backed by quotes or other sources</li> </ul>	10
<b>Diversity, equity, and inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant's operation is a woman-owned business, a business owned by a member of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community, and/or a veteran-owned business; or</li> <li>• Applicant's operation actively engages, serves, and or provides opportunities for these stakeholders.</li> </ul>	5

## Application questions

### Contact information

#### Applicant information

- Organization name
- Organization website
- Organization mailing address
- Organization county
- Minnesota State House District (Find your district at [Who Represents Me?](#)).

#### Primary contact

If awarded the grant, the person who will be responsible for leading the project, such as the project manager. This is also the person who will receive grant decision notices.

- Primary contact name (first and last name)
- Primary contact title
- Primary contact telephone number
- Primary contact email
- Primary contact mailing address

#### Authorized representative

If awarded a grant, is the person listed above legally authorized to sign the grant contract agreement for this organization? This should not be a grant writer or a 1099 contractor as these individuals typically would not have authority to enter the grant contract agreement with the MDA (Yes or No)

- If no, provide the following information for the Authorized Representative, authorized to sign any resulting grant contract agreement:
  - Authorized representative name (first and last name)
  - Authorized representative title
  - Authorized representative telephone number
  - Authorized representative email
  - Authorized representative mailing address

## Eligibility

Confirm the following statements. You must respond “True” to all the statements to be eligible to apply for this grant. If your project is recommended for phase two of the review process, you will need to sign a certification for some of these statements.

- The applicant is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government. (True or False)
- The applicant is registered and in good standing with the Minnesota of the Secretary of State (SOS) or is not required to maintain a registration with the SOS. You can verify that you are registered and in good standing by searching for your entity’s name on the SOS website.) (True or False)
- The applicant’s current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years. A principal is defined as a public official, a board member, or staff (paid or volunteer) with the authority to access funds provided by this grant opportunity or to determine how those funds are used. (True or False)
- The applicant does not owe the State of Minnesota any back taxes and has not defaulted on any State of Minnesota backed financing in the last seven years. (True or False)
- The applicant is compliant with current state and federal regulations, or this project will support the organization becoming compliant. (True or False)
- The applicant is not an MDA employee, spouse or domestic partner of an employee, or a farm or business principally owned by one of them. (True or False).
- Does the applicant’s leadership, board of directors, or governing body include any MDA employees or their spouses/domestic partners? (Yes or No)
  - o If yes, list their name(s) and role(s) in the applicant’s organization.

### Organizational eligibility

- Is your organization a for-profit business, nonprofit organization, or some other type of entity?
  - o For-profit business
  - o Nonprofit organization
  - o City/county/state government entity
  - o Tribal nation or government entity
  - o Other: Please describe
- If you selected nonprofit organization: The applicant is registered with the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office and is current on its annual reporting requirements or is exempt from the registration requirement. See MINN. STAT. 309.515 for more information on registration exemptions. You can verify that you are registered and have an active status by searching for your entity’s name on the Attorney General’s Office website.) (True or False)
- If you selected for-profit business: The applicant is not under bankruptcy proceedings. (True or False)
- If you selected for-profit business: The applicant will disclose any liens on assets, if required as part of the pre-award risk assessment. (True or False)

## Attestations

Attest to the following statements. You must respond “Yes” to all the statements to apply for this grant. If your project is recommended for phase two of this process, you will need to sign a certification for some of these statements.

- I attest that I have the authority to apply for this grant. (Yes or No)
- I attest that all information supplied in this application is true, correct, and reliable to the best of my knowledge. (Yes or No)
- I attest and understand that the submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the grant contract agreement award and may subject me and my organization to suspension or debarment proceedings, as well as other remedies available to the State, by law. (Yes or No)
- I attest that the supporting documentation for the claims and assertions made within this application is available to the MDA for its review. (Yes or No)
- I attest and understand that the submission of additional documents, as described in the request for proposals (RFP), may be required as part of the pre-award risk assessment if my project is recommended for phase two of the review process. (Yes or No)
- I attest that work has not started on the proposed project, and we will not begin work before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and reaches its start date, whichever is later. The MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the effective start date of the grant contract agreement. (Yes or No)

## Previous state of Minnesota and federal grants

Have you been awarded a grant from the State of Minnesota or the federal government in the past five years? (Yes or No)

- If yes, provide the details of the award amount(s), the duties, and the outcomes of the grant(s). (1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Project summary

### Grant request

- Project Name
- Total Project Cost
- Total Grant Request. Minimum \$50,000 and maximum of \$100,000.
- Expected Project Start Date
  - Must be after the contract is signed by you and the State of Minnesota.
  - Award notification will be in late August/early September, and contracts are expected to be signed in October 2026.
- Expected Project End Date
  - Contracts must end December 31, 2027
  - You will have up to one month (30 days) after your contract end date to submit for a reimbursement.
  - All items and services must be paid for by the end date of the contract.

## Project description

Provide a brief description of your project outlining the need for the project, project objectives, and what you plan to purchase and why. Try to limit your description to three sentences. *(500 characters, including spaces)*

## Business readiness, financial sustainability, and experience

### Performance capacity

Describe your capacity to perform the kind of work that would be funded by the grant, including your history of performing this kind of work or similar work. Describe how your current staffing, organizational structure, current budget, partners/collaborators, business plan, and marketing strategies will contribute to your capacity to carry out the proposed activities, effectively complete your project, and complete grant reporting requirements. Include your work related to continuous living cover crops and cropping systems *(2,000 characters, including spaces)*.

### Business plan summary

Provide a summary of your business plan. *(2,000 characters, including spaces)*.

- What previous investments or commitments to CLC have your organization made?
- How is your business looking to grow or remain competitive?

## Impact on Minnesota agriculture and the environment

### Current CLC crops or cropping systems

Does your organization currently work with CLC crops and cropping systems? (Yes/No)

### Scale of CLC crops and cropping systems

How will the scale of CLC crops and cropping systems your organization works on change because of this grant project (by crop or system)? Please provide a before and after estimate. *(1,000 characters, including spaces)*

*Example: In 2025, we were able to ABCD. After we complete the grant project in December 2027, we estimate we can do LMNO. This could be acres directly planted, estimated based on input purchases, measures due to customer surveys, etc.*

### Supply chain and market development

Briefly describe who you collaborate with and/or sell products to. Estimate the number of market partners and outlets used by your organization between January 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025. Examples of market outlets include wholesale distributors, direct-to-consumer channels, retail stores, and farmers markets. *(1,000 characters, including spaces)*

### Market expansion and diversification

Describe how this project plans to diversify and expand access to markets or supply chains in Minnesota. *(1,000 characters, including spaces)*

- Describe how the project plans to diversify markets and/or increase market access.

- If you expect to increase the number and/or types of market outlets from this project, estimate the increase(s) and explain how the project will achieve these goals.
- Anticipated additional sources on Minnesota agricultural products. This grant will prioritize Minnesota grown CLC crops and CLC cropping systems.

*Examples: In 2025 we sold to 10 schools and with the grant we expect to be able to sell to 20 schools across the Twin Cities metro area. Vista Acres Vineyards, New Ulm, MN (2024 - \$50,000 grapes); Happy Plants Inc., Thief River Falls, MN (2025 - \$3,000 hops and \$15,000 barley).*

### **Increasing sales**

Describe how this project plans to increase the sales of agricultural products from CLC crops or cropping systems in Minnesota. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

### **Impact on Minnesota’s environment**

Briefly describe the environmental benefits of your project and how your project will protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance Minnesota's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, or other natural resources? (1,000 characters, including spaces)

### **Measuring outcomes**

Describe how your organization plans to measure the outcomes of your project. The measures will be reported in your final report. Examples of measures include increased sales, increased market, increased supply chain outlets for agricultural products from CLC crops and cropping systems, other impacts to your organization, and or environmental outcomes. (1,500 characters, including spaces).

### **Work plan and timeline**

Complete the following table with your work plan. You should include the steps that you will take to complete your project. You should include the steps that you will take to successfully complete your project. The timeline will be used to monitor high level progress of projects and should include discrete, measurable goals. For example, you might include target dates for requesting quotes, installing and testing equipment, and full launch of the equipment or product.

Example:

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Description of Task/Action Item</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>
<b>October 2026</b>	Request bids for grain processing equipment	Project director
<b>October 2026</b>	Sign contract with Improved Grain Processors	CEO

Optional: If there is not enough space in the table provided in the application, you may upload a work plan as an Excel or Word file if you use the same format as the example above.

## Budget and budget narrative

### Budget table

Create a budget using the example format below. If specific contractors are needed and named in the application, grantees will not need to undergo a formal bidding process as long as you use these contractors for your project.

Expected time of expense (Fiscal quarter) -Oct-Dec 2026 -Jan-Mar 2027 -Apr-Jun 2027 Etc. (see above)	Item/Description	Item category Choose from the following: -Contracted Services -Salary -Supplies -Travel costs -Education/Training -Equipment	Quantity	Cost per unit	Total Estimate	Source of Estimate
<b>Oct- Dec 2026</b>	<b>Ex: Hammer Mill</b>	<i>Equipment</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>\$15,000</i>	<i>\$15,000</i>	<i>Improved Grain Processors</i>
<b>Oct- Dec 2026</b>	<b>Ex: Contractor Hours</b>	<i>Contracted Services</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>\$100</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>	<i>Minnesota Grain Growers</i>

### Budget narrative

Justify your budget and explain how you plan to spend funding for your project. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

- All items included in the budget should be included in the budget narrative. Explain how the equipment and services in the budget table will help you develop and accelerate commercialization, supply chains and markets for agricultural products from CLC crops and cropping systems into value-added products or diversify/expand your market outlets.
- Briefly explain if you will leverage other funding sources (financing, other grants, private investment, personal investment, or organization funds, etc.) related to this project.

(Note: Match funding is *not* required)

## Diversity, equity, and inclusion

This grant program prioritizes historically underserved communities, including woman-owned businesses, businesses owned by members of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community, veteran-owned businesses, and businesses that meaningfully serve BIPOC or Native American Tribal communities.

Is your business owned and operated by these stakeholders or do you actively engage, serve, or provide opportunities for these stakeholders? Please explain how these priorities are reflected in your organization, if at all. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

# Reimbursement acknowledgement

The MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the effective start date of the grant contract agreement. The effective start date for a grant contract agreement is the date it is signed by all parties, and the effective start date (listed in the grant contract) has been reached, whichever is later.

1. I understand that all payments on this grant project will be made on a reimbursement basis based on the terms outlined in the Payments section of the RFP. (Yes or No)
2. I understand that any obligation to pay for equipment, good or services made prior to the effective date of the contract, cannot be reimbursed by MDA. Examples of "obligations to pay" for goods or services include purchase orders, purchase agreements, retainer agreements, downpayments, sales orders and any and any transaction creating and invoice. (Yes or No)

Expenses that have been (or will be) reimbursed under any federal, state, or local government funding or other grants are not allowable costs. Project costs that already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs may not receive funding for the same activities and expenses from this grant.

3. I understand the MDA will not reimburse for costs that have been or will be submitted to another grant or funding source for reimbursement.